

# The 10 Most Important Dates in Church History

## **A.D. 70-The Destruction of Jerusalem**

In Luke 21:20 (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2021.20>) Jesus predicted that Jerusalem would be surrounded and destroyed. This prediction was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Roman general Titus sacked Jerusalem and destroyed its Temple. The ramifications of this event were huge. It marked the end of the Jewish state until recent times and ended the sacrificial system of the Jews. The destruction also signaled a shift in the power structure of the church. The mostly Jewish church quickly became Gentile. Plus, many in the church also viewed this tragedy as God's judgment upon the Jews and evidence that the church had become the "new Israel."

## **313-The Edict of Milan**

Before 313 Christianity was a religion on the run as persecution made staying alive a top priority for the followers of Christ. This changed, though, when the two Roman emperors--Constantine of the West and Lucinius of the East agreed to allow Christianity to function as a tolerated religion. But not only did the Edict of Milan allow Christianity to function without hindrance, by the end of the century Christianity became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. Thus the Edict of Milan helped lead to the merger between the Christian religion and the state--a union that has existed until the last few decades.

## **325-The Council of Nicea**

This first of the four great ecumenical councils tackled the explosive issue of whether Jesus Christ was equal to God the Father. Arius argued that Jesus was a created being who was of a similar substance as the Father. His opponent, Athanasius of Alexandria, however, asserted that Jesus was not a created being. He argued that Jesus was of the same substance as the Father. After a long debate, all but two of the nearly 300 bishops at the council agreed with Athanasius that Jesus was "true God." Although debate concerning the person of Jesus would continue, this was a significant victory for the orthodox view of the person of Christ.

## **367-Athanasius Defines the New Testament Canon**

Others had mentioned the canonical books of the New Testament in their writings, but Athanasius, in his "Thirty-ninth Festal Letter," was the first person to list all 27 books that now make up our New Testament. Noticeably left out by Athanasius were the "Epistle of Barnabas" and "Shepherd of Hermas." Included were the debated books of "2 Peter" and "Revelation." Referring to these 27 books of the New Testament, Athanasius declared, "In these alone the teaching of godliness is proclaimed. No one may add to them, and nothing may be taken from them." This "closed canon," as declared by Athanasius, was recognized by the Christian church from this point onward.

## **451-The Council of Chalcedon**

This fourth and last of the great ecumenical councils solidified the orthodox view of the person of Christ. Attended by 150 bishops, Chalcedon affirmed that Christ had two natures--human and divine, and that these two natures existed within one person without being blurred.

Search the site

## **1054-East/West Schism**

Although the parting of the ways between East and West began much earlier, 1054 is often viewed as the official date for the separation between Western Christians (Roman Catholics) and Eastern Christians (Eastern Orthodox). Several religious and political factors were at play in the division between Western and Eastern Christians, yet two stand out. First, the Western Church asserted that the pope's authority extended over the entire church, including the East. The Eastern Church, however, rejected papal authority. Second, the Western church argued that the Holy Spirit proceeded from both the Father and the Son. The East said that the Holy Spirit proceeded only from the Father. These differences could not be overcome and thus the Eastern and Western churches parted ways.

## **1456-Gutenberg Produces the First Printed Bible**

Johann Gutenberg's invention of the printing press and the first Bible were nothing short of revolutionary, both politically and religiously. For the first time, books could now be mass-produced and not kept only as the property of the state. Without this invention, the Protestant reformation may never have taken root. But with it, the Bible was put into the hands of the common people. As a result, the Protestant belief of the priesthood of all believers could now also be joined with a Bible in the hands of all believers. Gutenberg's invention of the printing press was so revolutionary that Biography of the Millennium on the A&E channel listed him as the most important person of the millennium.

## **1517-Luther Posts His "95 Theses"**

On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther posted his "95 Theses" on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg. At issue for Luther was the sale of indulgences by the Catholic Church. The ramifications of this event were huge both politically and religiously as Luther's posting began the Protestant Reformation. When asked why he did it, Luther said he was bound by Scripture and reason. Luther was condemned as a heretic and sentenced to die. He escaped and the Protestant Reformation spread.

## **1545-Council of Trent Begins**

The Protestant Reformation was met by what theologians have called the Catholic Counter Reformation. In 1545, the Council of Trent, consisting of 255 leaders, met to address internal clergy corruption and deal with the Protestant threat. As a result, indulgences were banned and clergy corruption was curtailed. Most importantly, though, the Roman Catholic Church solidified its doctrines in the face of the Protestant challenge. The Protestant doctrines of "scripture alone" and "justification by faith alone" were condemned and curses were pronounced on those who believed these doctrines. The findings of the Council of Trent, which relied heavily on the teachings of Thomas Aquinas, characterized Roman Catholicism until the 1960s.

## **1962-Vatican II Council Begins**

The winds of change were in the air on October 12, 1962 when twenty-four hundred Roman Catholic bishops met in Rome to discuss what direction the Catholic Church would take for the Modern Era. Some of the results of the Council included: (1) a shift in emphasis from the church as a monarchical structure organized under the primacy of the pope to the collegial union of bishops; (2) a positive view of the role of non-Christian religions; (3) an admittance that both Catholics and Protestants were to blame for the division during the Reformation and that

Protestants are now to be considered "separated brethren"; and (4) an acceptance of the use of vernacular language in the liturgy. Although not officially rejecting the decrees of Trent, Vatican II offered a more gracious approach to non-Catholics and in doing so set a different tone for the church heading into a new millennium.

---

Copyright © Used by permission. All rights reserved. [www.theologicalstudies.org](http://www.theologicalstudies.org)

[Church History \(/tags/church-history\)](/tags/church-history)

**RESOURCES**

[Life Resources \(/life-resources\)](/life-resources)

[Ministry Resources \(/ministry-resources\)](/ministry-resources)

[Media \(/media-av\)](/media-av)

[Missions \(/missions\)](/missions)

[Español \(/inicio\)](/inicio)

[About Us \(/about-us\)](/about-us)

[Privacy Statement \(/privacy-statement\)](/privacy-statement)

[Contact Us \(/contact-us\)](/contact-us)

[Site Map \(/sitemap\)](/sitemap)

[Search the Site \(/search-the-site\)](/search-the-site)

[Subjects \(/tags\)](/tags)

[\(/what-is-content-syndication\)](/what-is-content-syndication)

